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ABSTRACT

This document presents information on the Model United Nations Program, including historical background, a description of how the Program works, and three steps for establishing a Model U.N. Program. A list of Model U.N. Publications and resources is included. (DB)

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# THE MODEL UNITED NATIONS IN BRIEF

BY

James P. Muldoon, Jr.
UNA-USA Director of Model U.N. & Youth Programs

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**United Nations Association of the United States of America**
**485 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (212) 697-3232**

# THE MODEL UNITED NATIONS IN BRIEF

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## Introduction

The Model United Nations is a very special educational enterprise. It has positively influenced countless young Americans throughout the past five decades the Model U.N. has been conducted. The sense of participation which is the essence of the Model United Nations experience seems to bring out the best in young people. They take their preparations seriously, then throw themselves into the U.N. simulations with enormous vigor and energy.

The popularity of the Model United Nations continues to grow each year. Through the Model U.N., generations of future leaders are learning not only about specific countries and issues, but also about the complexities of politics in a multilateral setting. To succeed in the Model U.N. environment takes the skills of the negotiator: to know how to listen, to persuade, and to sense when to step back and when to push for agreement. These skills are acquired more readily through life-like simulations than through traditional classroom learning, to which the Model U.N. is an excellent supplement. If young people are to meet the challenges of an even more complex and demanding world, then tomorrow's leaders will need their attributes in abundance.

The processes of the United Nations that are emulated in the Model U.N. are characteristic of the increasingly important principles of democratic life. Respect for the rule of law, civil discourse, the peaceful competition of ideas, and consensus-building and consensus-conversion through international governing institutions are all key ingredients in the Model U.N. experience. The Model United Nations teaches a student the importance of tolerance and, more importantly, the pertinence of resolving differences through dialogue and compromise.

With the wave of democracy sweeping the nations of our world, young people in the United States and elsewhere must be trained in the ways of democracy. It is of particular importance to the nations now in transition to democracy in East/Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The Model United Nations offers an excellent means to give practical expression to democratic practices in a multiracial, multicultural, and multilateral setting.

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***For more details about the Model United Nations or to order Model U.N. materials and publications contact: Model U.N. & Youth Programs, UNA-USA, 485 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10017-6104 telephone (212) 697-3232; facsimile (212) 682-9185. 15 May 1992*** ***All Rights Reserved.***

## Historical Perspective

The Model United Nations Program is the successor to a student-directed simulation of the U.N.'s predecessor - the League of Nations. Now for over 50 years, young Americans of all backgrounds and walks of life have voluntarily participated in these educational exercises so as to experience first-hand the decision-making processes and diplomatic work at the United Nations.

The first two decades of the Program involved predominantly university students in inter-collegiate conferences which modelled the U.N. General Assembly, Security Council and International Court of Justice. These early simulations were conducted primarily on major university campuses in the Northeastern part of the United States with a few being run in the Midwest and the West Coast. The Model United Nations popularity soon contributed to the rapid spread of the activity throughout the United States in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Not only did more university students get involved, but the program quickly incorporated middle and high school students.

Today, there are over 60,000 young Americans from the sixth grade through graduate school taking part in one or more Model U.N. conferences each year. Model U.N. conferences numbering over 130 in 1992 are being organized on an annual basis in nearly all fifty states. In addition, the Model United Nations Program has taken root in other parts of the world, particularly because of the leadership of American high schools, international schools and United Nations Associations in Canada, Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Korea, Philippines, Japan, India, Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine.

The Model United Nations is a simulation of the United Nations system. Students assume the roles of "ambassadors" to the United Nations and debate the current issues on the U.N.'s agenda. Through diplomacy and negotiation, Model U.N. students seek out solutions to complex global concerns such as the environment, economic development, refugees, AIDS, conflict resolution, disarmament, and human rights. The Model United Nations Program is open to all interested students. It has never been an elite educational activity which consciously precluded young people of a particular socio-economic classes or academic disciplines from participating. In fact, the Model U.N. is a group activity that can best achieve educational goals if a diverse range of backgrounds, skills, and experiences are involved.

## Educational Goals and Objectives

The Model U.N. Program has a tripartite educational objective - Content, Process and Product. Each part of the program's educational objective contributes to the important learning process for each participating student. The Model U.N. links cognitive learning to self-actualization through an experiential process. Thus, reinforcing and integrating intellectual concepts within the general psyche of the student.

The Model United Nations experience equips students with valuable content that includes increased vocabulary; knowledge of nation-states' foreign policies and of the United Nations' structure, functions and aims; comprehension of national interests, geography, other cultures and values, and international legal and financial systems. The experience demonstrates to students the importance of Process skills such as advance research skills; improvement in reading comprehension, public speaking, enhancement of cooperative learning skills; information analysis, synthesis and evaluation; capabilities in critical thinking, problem-solving, negotiation and compromise; integration of current events with history; and, development of leadership skills. Finally, the end result or product of the Model U.N. experience is young people who are more diplomatic; who are knowledgeable, conscientious and concerned citizens; who better understand social change through democratic institutions and systems; and who appreciate the perspectives of others and are accountable for their own opinion.

Through the Model United Nations, students actively acquire and synthesize life skills needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century. By preparing and participating in simulations of the United Nations and other International Organizations, students develop and use critical, creative and productive thinking skills to gain a global perspective on issues confronting the world community. Students further develop their leadership and communications abilities and learn to empathize with people of diverse countries, cultures and viewpoints.

**How the Model U.N. works**

There are two basic components to the Model U.N. experience. First, students go through an intensive preparation process where they research the countries they will represent, organize positions, prepare policy papers, draft resolutions, and practice the rules of procedure and public speaking techniques. Second, the students become the "ambassadors" during the Model U.N. conference which can last between one and five days. The role-playing during the conference involves participants in the exciting process of synthesizing and ultimately applying the information and skills acquired during preparation. The Model U.N. experience demonstrates the importance of the precious skills of caucusing, negotiation, consensus-building and compromise.

Another important part of the Model U.N. Program involves the organization and administration of the U.N. simulation. The ways of conducting a Model U.N. range from small single classroom settings involving 15 to 30 students to large national inter-school conferences with over 2,000 students. The scale and scope of any Model U.N. is determined by the resources of the organizers and the anticipated number of students who will want to participate. One of the greatest assets of the Model U.N. is its simplicity. It doesn't necessarily require advance technologies, large budgets, or extravagant environs to be conducted. It can be held in either a regular classroom or a large convention hotel.

The Model U.N. Program includes every conceivable permutation of U.N. structures and sizes. But, in every case the basic aspects of the U.N. process are the same. No matter how large or how small, the Model U.N. must include a meeting place, officers of the U.N. body being simulated, rules of procedure, a secretariat to serve the needs of the participants, and reproduction and word-processing equipment. The Model U.N. does not have to cost a lot of money to conduct and this important factor has made the program an excellent teaching tool for teachers and administrators.

The Model U.N. Program in the United States is decentralized and is driven predominantly by the students themselves. The organization of, as well as the participation in, the simulations is conducted by students themselves. In the United States, the lion share of major Model U.N. conferences are organized and administered by university students with secondary school students as the delegates. The workload is rarely placed upon the shoulders of teachers or administrators who in reality often take a back seat throughout the Model U.N. experience.

The Model U.N. brings together participants with organizers for a common defined purpose - to learn the way and means of global cooperation and effective international decision-making. Each student has his or her role to play within the dynamic of diplomatic processes as they are structured within the United Nations. This "Learning by Doing" approach is what creates the excitement and enthusiasm for learning within every student.

**Establishing a Model United Nations Program**

The Model United Nations Program evolved over many years in the United States. In many respects, its development was a trickle down phenomenon starting at the university level and slowly but surely encompassing the lower grades. The Model U.N. Program can be established in a particular class or course, in a school-wide setting, or on a inter-school level. Establishing the Model U.N. in other national educational systems does not require that the same developmental process that occured in the United States be repeated. In fact, the use of the Model United Nations in education can begin at any educational level. And, its scope and size can always expand, especially if the interest and enthusiasm for the Model U.N. exceeds the level at which it starts.

There are three basic types of Model U.N. Programs - Classroom Model U.N.s, Intra-school Model U.N.s, and Inter-School Model U.N. conferences. There are the same fundamental steps which are required to successfully conduct any of these types of Model U.N.s.

## STEP ONE

The first step involves establishing the time, place, structure and size of the Model U.N. The following questions need to be answered from the outset before a Model U.N. Program will be successful:

1) Who and how many will participate?

2) When is the best time to conduct the simulation?

3) What parts of the U.N. system (e.g. General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, etc.) do we want to model (the answer to this question, in part, is dependent on the answer to question 1)?

4) Where can the simulation be conducted (the answer to this important question depends on the answers to questions 1-3)?

5) Who will serve on the secretariat and how should it be organized (the answer to this question should reflect the answers to questions 1 and 3)?

6) What equipment (e.g. typewriters, copying machines, computers, etc.) is needed to successfully operate the simulation?

The organizers will need to build in sufficient time for the participating students to prepare for the simulation when initiating a Model U.N. program. In every case, it will take a minimum of three to four weeks of preparation for a student or group of students to complete the research and studying about the country they are assigned to role-play. Likewise, the organizers should permit at least two months for a small simulation and six months for a larger Model U.N. to assign the countries to participating students, prepare the documentation on the issues to be on the agenda, to train the secretariat and presiding officers, and to settle all logistical matters and facilities for the simulation.

## STEP TWO

The next step is implementing the Model U.N. If the first step is done well, the students will come prepared to role-play and throw themselves into the diplomatic process. Likewise, the secretariat will have established efficient procedures for processing the documentation during the simulation (e.g. resolutions, working papers, amendments, etc.), and will know how to conduct or preside over the meetings, using the U.N.'s rules of procedure, thus facilitating the decision-making process of the participants.

## STEP THREE

Finally, the organizers and participants, either together or separately, must evaluate and assess the experience. This is probably the most critical step of the Model U.N. because the Model U.N. experience can generate misconceptions and reinforce undesireable or inaccurate attitudes and outlooks unintentionally. A debriefing between the students and their faculty advisors or an adult who observed the proceedings after the Model U.N. will avert negative outcomes and correct misconceptions.

### Types of Model U.N. Programs

The most simplest form the Model U.N. Program can take is the classroom simulation. In this case, the simulation is most often a model of the U.N. Security Council. This will require no less than fifteen students and no more than 50. For larger classes, other U.N. bodies with restricted membership like the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or one of the ECOSOC Commissions (e.g. human rights, women, population, or narcotic drugs) could be simulated. Any simulation of a U.N. organ will take a few days to conduct. In many U.S. classrooms, the class will devote a week of class time to the exercise. But, it should include a period of time devoted to preparation, since the students are being asked to role-play diplomats from other countries and they will need to find out what their assigned country's positions or policies may be on the matter to be discussed during the simulation. Classroom Model U.N.s can be easily and effectively conducted within a normal classroom setting with a chalkboard, pencils and paper.

The Intra-School Model U.N. Program is much larger and more complex. In this case, the school-wide simulation can involve all or part of the student body of the school. Depending on how many students will participate, this simulation can model the U.N. General Assembly and its standing Committees, the Security Council, and/or the Economic and Social Council. To model the larger organs of the U.N. will require at least 200 students and as many as several hundred. A simulation of this size is often conducted over a weekend at the school or three to four days during the school week. Since the number of students is significantly larger than the Classroom Model U.N., more time to the organization of the simulation will be needed. The need for more rooms, for more facilities and document processing resources, and for more officers and secretariat members will extend the period of pre-simulation time.

The Inter-School Model U.N. Program is the most extensive and complex of the three programs. The time to put together one or more Model U.N. conferences can be as long as twelve months. The typical size of these events involve several hundred students and can exceed 2,000. A Model U.N. conference will also model several U.N. bodies simultaneously over a three to five day period. Therefore, the logistical matters are often massive involving hotels, lodging, meals, a full range of word processing and reproduction equipment and facilities, and a large secretariat.

The costs of each of the Model U.N. Programs highlighted above can be as expensive as the organizers want to make it. The more elaborate the services and the larger the size and scope of the Model U.N., the more expensive the Program becomes. Yet, the Model United Nations is extremely flexible and is known to be able to fit almost any budget, no matter how modest.

The U.S. Model U.N. Program includes all of these program models. Yet, it is most developed on the inter-school level with over 100 Model U.N. conferences conducted each year throughout the country. The decentralization has permitted the Model U.N. Program to stretch nationwide into communities where there is an expressed need and interest. And the instrumental leadership role of students in the Program at all levels has sustained the dynamic nature of the Model U.N. over the years. In addition, the Model U.N. Program empowers students and effectively utilizes the "peer teaching" concept thus increasing the educational value and impact of the Model U.N. experience.

## ABOUT UNA-USA

The United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) is the national coordinator of the Model United Nations Program in the United States for over 25 years. UNA-USA is also the international center for information, materials, and services about the Model United Nations. As the leading global expert on Model U.N. methods and practices, UNA-USA offers quality materials, publications, and guidance to both participants and organizers within the Model United Nations community.

UNA-USA is a national organization dedicated to strengthening the United Nations system and to enhancing U.S. participation in international institutions. UNA-USA carries out its action agenda through a unique combination of public outreach, policy analysis, and international dialogue. Through a nationwide network of chapters, divisions, and affiliated organizations, UNA-USA reaches a broad cross-section of the American public. The Association provides information and educational services on the work of the U.N. and on other global issues for students, scholars, Congress, and the media.

## UNA-USA Model U.N. Resources and Services

UNA-USA Model U.N. publications include:

**The Model U.N. Survival Kit** (annual). The Kit contains four publications which provide comprehensive information for students and faculty participating in a Model U.N. Contains: *Guide to Delegate Preparation*, *Issues Before the General Assembly*, *International Economic Diplomacy*, and *We the Peoples: A Citizen's Guide to the United Nations*. Each of the publications in the Kit are available separately. Price: $22.50.

**The Calendar of Model U.N. Conferences** (annual). Basic information on who, where and when Model U.N. conferences are conducted each year throughout the world. Price: $5 each.

**The Model U.N. Network News** (quarterly). News and notes about the Model U.N. events, activities and student commentary around the world. Subscription: $5 annually.

**Organizing a Model U.N. Club for High School Students**. A basic guide to putting together a club in a high school. Price: 50 cents

**Organizing a Model U.N. Club for College Students**. A basic guide to putting together a club on a university campus. Price: 50 cents.

**How to Run a Model U.N.** A concise guide to starting a Model U.N. Includes "how to" sections on the General Assembly and Security Council. Price: $1 each.

**Model U.N. Rules of Procedure**. Slightly modified Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly and its Committees, the Economic and Social Council, the Functional Commissions of the Economic and Social Council, and the Provisional Rules of Procedure for the Security Council.

**Model U.N. Security Council Kit**. A complete Model Security Council simulation package designed for use in the classroom and as a community program activity. Price: $40 each.

**The Model U.N.** (15-minute video). An excellent introduction to the Model United Nations for students and faculty. Co-Produced by UNA-USA and the United Nations. Includes U.N. and Model U.N. footage and an informative printed booklet entitled *Introduction to the Model U.N.* *Price: $20 each*

UNA-USA also offers useful services and programs that includes an annual UNA-USA Model United Nations Seminar, a training and instructional program for faculty advisors and student leaders involved in the Model U.N. Program in the United States and throughout the world.

In addition, UNA-USA conducts teachers' workshops and introductory seminars on the Model United Nations throughout the world. UNA-USA also offers a wide range of individual personalized services to students and teachers interested in the Model U.N. These include special Model U.N. events organized under the direct supervision of UNA-USA's Model U.N. & Youth Programs (clients in 1992 include the 27th International Geographic Congress' Youth Congress Model U.N., Rotary International's Annual Convention Model General Assembly, and university-level international Model U.N. conferences in the United States and in Moscow, Tokyo and Cairo). UNA-USA is prepared to assist those interested in establishing a Model U.N. Program in schools, communities or nationally anywhere in the world.